



## ENGAGING YOUTH AS PARTNERS

More than 1 billion people ages 10 to 29 live in Asia. They are key drivers of future prosperity, security and democracy in their countries. They are also vital, untapped resources to meet today's local, national and global challenges.

Youth in the Asia-Pacific region are affected disproportionately by poverty, conflict, violence, unemployment and exclusion. Yet, evidence shows that if countries in the region invest effectively in their integrated development and engage them as partners in these efforts, this generation can pay a demographic dividend allowing countries to stimulate greater economic growth, promote democracy and stability and reach the 2030 UN Global Goals.

### A POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

USAID launched its Youth in Development Policy in 2012, outlining its commitment to a Positive Youth Development approach, which means viewing youth as assets and engaging with them throughout all sectors of our programming. USAID defines youth to be the young people in the 10-29 year age range, with a general programmatic focus on 15-24 years old.

The USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDMA) and the Youth in Development Policy follow these guiding principles: 1) Recognize youth participation as vital to development; 2) Invest in skills, assets and resilience; 3) Account for differences and commonalities among youth; 4) Create second chances; 5) Foster healthy relationships by involving mentors, families and communities; 6) Pursue gender equality; 7) Harness youth innovation and technology; and 8) Achieve sustainable results through stronger systems.

Recognizing that the intervention during the transition from children into adulthood is a critical time to help youth reach their full potential and expanding ability to contribute to their families and communities, USAID/RDMA engages youth through the following programming in the region:

- **Revamping Education for Employment - The USAID Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training (USAID COMET)** activity better prepares youth for employment by bridging the gap between educational institutions and employers in the Lower Mekong region. Through the MekongSkills2Work (MS2W) approach, which strengthens soft skills by making learning more dynamic, interactive, and student-centered, and improves linkages with industry, educational institutions better prepare graduates for 21st century workplaces. The MS2W e-learning portal is a key platform for the regional MS2W Network providing professional development resources for instructors, career-building tools for youth and links to private sector partners. Partners like Intel, Cisco and Amazon Web Services have donated technology and provided access to online courses, and have supported innovation challenges where youth can create technology-based solutions to global issues. By 2019, the project will reach 80,000 youth.
- **Building Food Security - Feed the Future Asia Innovative Farmers** activity catalyzes efforts to develop, adapt and scale agricultural technology, particularly with young people in the region. The activity focuses on youth as a key driving force in introducing new technologies and management practices for food security, bringing productivity and marketing tools to smallholder farmers and launching the Tech4Farmers Ag Innovation Hub platform. Through 2018, the Hub has engaged more than 400,000 youths in Asia interested in entrepreneurship, agribusiness and innovations through competitions, exchanges, social media and events. The Activity also works with young innovators and founders of technology firms including eFishery, Angkor Green, and SunFarmer, providing leadership and business skills training to help them efficiently grow their business.
- **Countering Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) - The USAID-funded IOM X** campaign encourages safe migration and public action to prevent human trafficking and exploitation in the Asia Pacific region. By leveraging the power and popularity of media and technology, USAID IOM X inspires young people and their communities to act against human trafficking. USAID IOM X focuses on youth engagement in key sectors with high risk for human trafficking such as manufacturing, domestic work and the fishing industry. USAID IOM X's *Do You Know Who Made It* campaign worked with Thailand's top YouTube creators to develop messages to make young urban Thais interested in the people behind the products and aware that there is exploitation linked to the products that they buy every day. The *Do You Know Who Made It* campaign videos have already received over 3 million views.
- **Civil Society Partnerships activity** is a Thailand-based activity that works to build a sustainable, regional civil society and academic networks in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. One of the interventions includes building awareness and knowledge among university students about the work of civil society organizations, and collaborating with Khon Kaen University to develop a curriculum on Development Studies to promote learning on social issues and to empower students to engage in social development work.

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